



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

# Vancouver Island

Quarterly Newsletter

Since 1902



## Canada's Oldest Rebel

We sponsored a full house event at the Belfry Theatre for the Victoria kick-off of Harry Leslie Smith's National tour. Mr. Smith is an honoured hero of the Second World War, who grew up in extreme poverty in Britain's pre-war slums, beginning work at 10 years old to dig coal to fuel industry and the mansions of the wealthy industrial barons of the early 1930's. There were no social safety nets back then. Harry spent many early mornings rummaging through garbage to feed his growling stomach. As a young man, Harry joined the Royal Air Force to fight Hitler's war, as a way to liberate his lot out of poverty, and to help bring about a societal change that would give his class, our class, a chance to scratch out an existence worth living. He had seen enough suffering and pain as a child.

Harry understands for the past 3 decades we've been fighting a completely different war, no pulpit screeching self-proclaimed demi-god with a narrow mustache (destined from that point to never become a fashion statement), but a much quieter slow moving multi-national corporate takeover of the world's political systems. It began with Maggie and the two Irishmen, attack on the working class of Britain, the U.S. and Canada. Today, those same corporate interests seek out the worlds oppressed and

give them hope cheaper than the North American slave trade was 200 years ago, and what they can't import in goods, they import in services through a "guest worker" program known in Canada as the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Harry immigrated to Canada after the war to chase a standard of life he and so many others fought and died to defend. At 92 years young Harry is Canada's oldest rebel and he's speaking out against Stephen Harper and our current federal Conservative Government's policies, as he fears without a change of rhetoric from our Prime Minister's Office, we are devolving back into a society without a middle-class. Essentially a return to a time when kids had to work to contribute their wages so the family could simply survive. To see the proliferation of Pay Day Loan Sharks, Food Banks, Housing shortages, of medicine you pay for or go without, and of a decent education afforded to only the well to do. This doesn't shock Harry, actually it's an environment all too familiar, and it has refueled a fire burning hotter than all the coal he dug as a child. Harry's message has resonated through the halls of Labour in Great Britain and he authored "Harry's Last Stand" in an effort to share what he has witnessed in his short stay thus far.

## Summer 2015

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## News & Notes

### Building Society AGM

There will be a Meeting of the Building Society after the following regular unit meetings.

**Note: (Times are approximate).**

**Marine Unit: Note change of meeting to accommodate Remembrance Day**

Nov. 10 - 6:00 PM  
Dockyard Legion

### Victoria Unit

Nov. 12 - 8:00 PM  
Pro Patria Legion

### Nanaimo Unit

Nov. 18 - 8:00 PM  
IBEW Office

### Campbell River/ Courtenay Unit

Nov. 19 - 8:00 PM  
Halbe Hall



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Vancouver Island

# Business Manager's Report



As many of you know, there is a direct relationship between your breadbox and the ballot box. October 19th's federal election is too important to the Canadian middle/working class; we can no longer afford to sit on the sidelines and watch the continued income gap expand. Our current Federal Government have gone out of their way to pick a fight with the Canadian Labour movement and this is our best opportunity to fight back.

## Bill C-525

The perfect example can be found in Bill 525 (now law). Alberta MP Blaine Caulkin moved the proposed Bill through Parliament, the Bill essentially makes it more difficult to form a union under the federal labour code, (if an employer has 20 employees and on the day they hold their vote to form a union only ten show up, and they all vote "Yes" it doesn't matter. They lose because of the people that didn't or couldn't show up automatically are counted as "No" votes). Mr. Caulkin said, he proposed the Bill, "because of the mountain of grievances against union bosses." Of course the facts tell a much different story. Over the past ten years, the Canadian Labour Board has heard just over 4,000 grievances, 6 were about the voting process, yes all of this was over a "mountain" of 6, actually 4 of them were against employers, and two against

unions. Okay, so 2.

Mr. Caulkin never spoke to any Industry Subject Matter experts, no lawyers, no Labour Board members, no Arbitrators, no unions, no professionals at all, apparently he talked to his constituents. The Conservatives voted unanimously in favour of this anti-union Bill, while every other Political Party and every other Member of Parliament voted against it. Unfortunately the Conservatives have a majority government and they can do whatever they want, and what they want is to bully unions and their members.

Prime Minister Harper called the earliest election ever in Canadian history. The reason he called the early election can be found in his "Fair Elections Act" which allows political parties to increase their spending over the longer period, and one thing the Conservatives have always been good at is to convince big business to financially contribute to the political party that will best take care of their interests. Our Prime Minister Stephen Harper refuses to meet with the Provincial Premiers, but somehow he found time to meet with Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker in June this year. Many of you will remember Scott Walker, he pushed "Right to Work" (for less) Legislation into Wisconsin a few years ago.

## Health Care

As Canadian Baby Boomers close in on retirement our health care costs are going to increase. We have to begin a national discussion on what our health care system will look like going forward. Today 4 million Canadians do not have a family doctor; 3 million Canadians cannot afford their medications that are prescribed by their attending doctors; 800 thousand Canadians cannot find affordable assisted living accommodations. The next natural step for the federal conservatives will be a push towards privatization. A system we only have to look south to see how broken it can be, the number one reason for personal bankruptcy in America is caused by the costs of health care. In 1891 there were 7 known diseases and 12 known medicines all

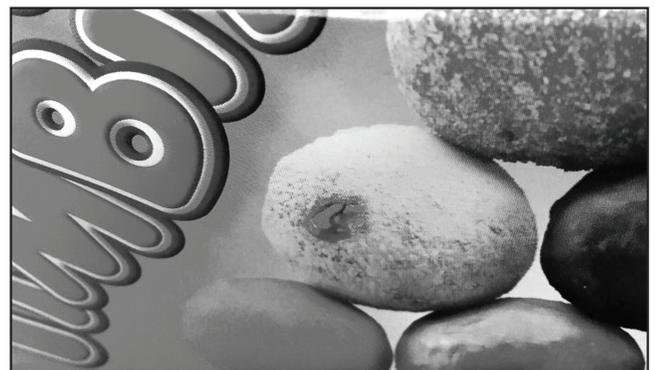
of them plant based, today there are 10,000 known diseases and 561,000 pharmaceutical drugs. The number one business in the world is pharmaceutical drugs at over a trillion dollars. U.S. pharmaceuticals see profits 30,000% to 50,000%. To move towards privatization will ensure the rich stay healthy and the sick stay poor. Health Care has been enshrined as a fundamental Canadian right, and it will take plenty of work and political will to keep what we have.

## Employment Insurance

The Harper Conservatives changed the Employment Insurance system a couple of years ago, those changes have had traumatic effects on seasonal and cyclical workers like construction, and ship repair. A few months back Target stores and Future Shop stores across Canada shut down their operations laying off 20,000 workers, who because of those changes did not qualify for E.I.; 2 million Canadians are unemployed, and only about 40% are eligible to receive EI benefits. The changes have victimized workers who by no fault of their own lost their jobs.

## Canadian Pension Plan

11 million people go to work each day without any real retirement funding other than the Canadian Pension Plan. The Harper Conservatives increased the retirement age from 65 to 67 before you can apply for Old Age Security or the General Income Supplement, taking thousands of dollars out of all of our pockets. The Canadian Labour Congress put together a strategy to help properly fund all Canadians retirement by simply increasing the CPP so all workers could begin to retire with dignity. That plan would cost the equivalent of 7 Timbits a day.



## Business Manager's Report (Continued)

Meanwhile we have retirees making tough choices like turning off their heat, or buying enough groceries to eat, this is our families and friends future unless we change the CPP to reflect today's reality. We wrote the Finance Minister advocating a higher cap instead of cutting off at an artificially low cap for Canadians retirement needs.



### Good paying Infrastructure Jobs

Most workers' wages have stagnated over the past decade (of course with the exception of the 1%). Minimum wage jobs have grown by 66%, and we have lost over 400,000 good paying manufacturing jobs throughout the Country. Over 1 million Canadians have two or more jobs, and the same number of Canadians visits a food bank every month to subsidize their income. The Conservatives have always trumpeted themselves as the saviour of the economy, but after eight consecutive years of deficits, and a growing class of working poor, they have had more than enough time to build Canada, and they have chosen to blow their political space on right-wing ideology. Instead of working to better the Canadian economy and marketplace it has continued to slide while he allows the growing continuation of Temporary Foreign Workers Program, hell he hired one out of Australia to help with his re-election campaign. It's time to begin a discussion about income, and move away from cheap replacement temporary foreign workers, this will not happen with the Conservatives.

### The Duffy Trial

Over the last month the Federal Conservatives have been plagued by news coverage of the Duffy Trial, and rightfully so, it's the biggest senate scandal in the history of our Country and the Prime Minister's Office attempted to cover it up. Senator Mike Duffy from PEI was caught misrepresenting his residence expenses, as well as claiming expenses as a senator (from the Canadian tax payer) while in actual fact he was busy running all over the country as the federal conservative poster boy. Until the matter hit the fan, and he was exposed, that's when the Prime Minister's Office got involved and cooked up a plan to simply pay those expenses from the Conservative Party through Nigel Wright, Stephen Harper's Chief of Staff.

The Prime Minister has said from day one, this was a dumb deal between Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright who was immediately fired (or resigned), his termination was a little shaky on the facts. Prime Minister Harper also said, no one else on his staff was aware of this deal as well, (which of course turns out to also be shaky on the facts), as his next in line and current Chief of Staff Ray Novak was also in on the plan as indicated by apparently hundreds of emails, as well as Harper's UBC tenured Law Professor Benjamin Perrin, who took the stand and clearly recalled himself with Wright, Novak and Duffy's former lawyer Janice Payne putting the deal together to cover the Duffy expenses. So, at least another half-dozen of Harper's staff knew of the plan to repay Mike Duffy's expenses to avoid the RCMP investigation and the external audit. People like Chris Woodcock former director of issues management responsible for identifying media headaches for PM Harper and extinguishing them. Apparently he knew nothing of the repayment scheme even though an email he received from Nigel Wright said;

*"For you only: I am covering Duffy's \$90K,"*

Clearly by the time the court broke off what has become obvious is that our Prime Minister has played hard and fast with the truth around what really happened with Harper appointed Senator Duffy, as Duffy flew around the Country bleating the virtues of the Conservative Party, and avoided the truth from the day this issue was brought up and every day since. Unfortunately, the Duffy trial will not resume until after the Election.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister visited Campbell River at surprise events with advance tickets for only the Conservative Party faithful, to obviously curtail any protest around the Harper campaign trail, while all three opposition party leaders walked openly throughout the Island taking selfie's with the general public, opening them to whatever campaign politics bring with it.

### Bill C-377

Last but certainly not least, after over 3 years of fighting back the union busting steaming road apple of poorly written legislation Bill C-377, federal conservative senators voted to change their own rules around dealing with private member's bills and passed this nefarious Bill. What was supposed to be a day to celebrate and recognize our country as a free and democratic nation, left me empty on July 1st, I spent most of the day considering options for the labour movement, and contemplating the words of Harry Leslie Smith and those of his sworn enemy, who in Berlin, May of 1933 said;

*"We must close union offices, confiscate their money and put their leaders in prison. We must reduce worker's salaries and take away their right to strike"*

The Stephen Harper Conservative Government over the past five years legislated reductions to our member's salaries through Bill C-10, he has taken many unions ability to strike away and ordered them back to work, Bill C-525 makes it harder to form a union and easier to get rid of one, Bill C-51 contemplates arresting union

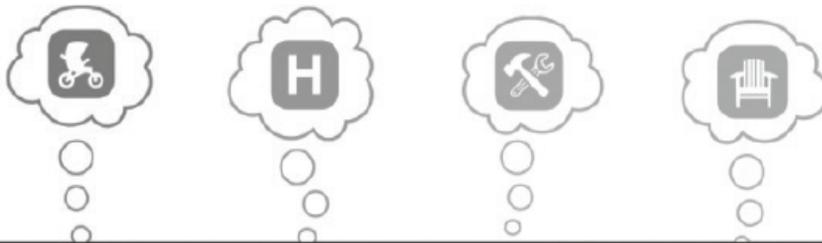
# Business Manager's Report (Continued)

activists and jailing them, Bill C-377 contemplates using our money to inform and help our own competition, regardless of the fact that seven (7) provinces, the best constitutional lawyers in the country warned the Canadian Senate that the Bill was un-Constitutional, regardless that Canada's Privacy Commissioner told the Senate Committee that C-377 broke Canada's Privacy Laws, after a myriad of experts explaining the Bill was poorly written, discriminatory, and served no obvious purpose, costing Canadian's in the upper region of another 12 million dollars in taxes to fund the new Revenue Agency bureaucracy, the Conservative stacked Senate Committee broke their

own rules and voted to pass the Bill. This Bill will drive up our costs and drive down our ability to serve you, our membership. They have put us in double jeopardy, if we release the information we can be sued civilly under privacy laws, if we don't release the information they plan on fining our unions heavily and jailing their leadership. When you lay Harper's union-busting playbook over Hitler's, it appears to be taken from the same pages of radical fascism.

October's federal election will become a pivotal point for the union movement in Canada, the federal Conservatives have done more damage to Canadian democracy by dashing the dreams of Canada's middle/working class, over the past decade we have moved closer to Harry Leslie Smith's childhood of forcing Canadian middle-class families to send their children out to find work to support their families. That is not a Canada any of us want to return to, we have to come to the conclusion that enough is enough, we need to talk to our friends and family members about the damage he is doing to our nation abroad, and at home.

It's time for change.



What IF Canadians made a better choice?

#BETTERCHOICE

## Federal Conservatives Contemplate Income Splitting

The Broadbent Institute recently released a study that looked at who would benefit from the income splitting proposal advocated by the Harper Conservatives, finding nine out of ten Canadian households would receive no benefit at all from the proposed tax policy. This policy, like so many others put out by the Conservatives, does not stand to offer any benefits to the majority of our members and working people across Canada.

In 2007, the Harper Conservatives began experimenting with income splitting, and have pledged to extend it to all families with children under 18 after the budget is balanced, a piece of policy likely to be included in the next federal budget. Their current proposal would allow families with children under 18 to shift up to \$50,000 of taxable income from the higher-income spouse to their lower-income partner.

The study by the Broadbent Institute looked at who would benefit from this proposal based on the combination of earnings and tax brackets for different families as well as what the regional variation in benefits would look like.

### Key Findings:

- Two out of three families would receive less than \$500
- To gain from income splitting, a family with children under 18 must have two parents in different tax brackets to share income. Thus single parent families (20.2%) and those with partners in the same tax bracket (28.9%) are automatically excluded from benefitting.

- Just 1.7% of all Canadian families with children under age 18 – those who have one earner in the top tax bracket of 29% and another parent who pays zero tax rate – would be eligible for the maximum benefit.
- Only one in seven Canadian families with children under 18 (13.8%) would receive a benefit of \$2,000 or more.
- 61.1% of Quebec families with children under 18 would see no benefit at all, compared to 44.1% in Alberta.
- Nationally, 54.1% of families that are the target of the scheme would receive no benefit at all.
- Implementing the proposed tax policy would cost an estimated \$3 billion in lost federal revenues.

The late Jim Flaherty, Former Finance Minister, summed income splitting up well when he said it *"benefits some parts of the Canadian population a lot. And other parts of the Canadian population virtually not at all."* If the intention is truly to help Canadian families, the Conservative government should scrap its plan to introduce this costly tax scheme – one that stands to further increase income inequality. Both the NDP and Federal Liberals have said they would scrap the plan.

You can find the full report here:

<https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/sites/default/files/thebigsplit-final.pdf>